

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

November 1985

CIA

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85-10198 XM

Gorbachev's Foreign Policy Team: Implications for the US

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summary

By transferring Gromyko to the Presidency last July, Gorbachev boldly demonstrated his intention to take control of foreign policy. The General Secretary has begun to surround himself with individuals willing to re-examine past policies and project an innovative and forward looking stance. -In contrast to Gromyko-- whose fixation on US-Soviet relations and reputation for inflexibility reportedly led to his removal-- Foreign Minister Shevardnadze appears more willing to support regional initiatives, not only for their own sake but in order to gain the Soviet Union added leverage vis-a-vis the US. While the Soviets have not made any dramatic policy departures, we have already seen a revitalized foreign policy effort, with new overtures to the US, West Europe and Asia.

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Despite Gorbachev's desire to pursue a more "balanced" foreign policy, managing relations with the US continues to be the leadership's first priority. Gorbachev's initial foreign policy actions appear designed to strengthen pressures for change in US policy--by creating the impression of a more flexible Soviet diplomacy and forging closer relations with key US allies in Europe and Asia.

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This paper was prepared by [redacted] the Domestic Policy Division, Office of Soviet Analysis with a contribution from USSR/EE Division/OCR. Comments and questions may be directed to the author [redacted] or to the Chief, Domestic Policy Division, [redacted]

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State Dept. review completed

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In the only other major foreign policy appointment, Yevgeniy Primakov, former director of the Oriental Institute, was named in November to head the senior foreign affairs think tank, the World Economics and International Relations Institute (IMEMO). [redacted]

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[redacted] While not an "Americanist"--his area of expertise is the Mid-east--Primakov appears to share the group's extensive knowledge of the West.

(Anatoliy Gromyko), son of the former Foreign Minister, who now heads the Africa Institute was also rumored to be in the running for the IMEMO post. His failure to get the top spot is yet another indication that the political power of his father has declined.

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Changes to Come

Although Gorbachev and Shevardnadze have moved deliberately so far, their penchant for removing those who do not adopt to the "new way of doing business" probably spells trouble for other officials closely identified with policies of the past. [redacted]

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[redacted] US embassy officers reported that Korniyenko was "noticeably out of sorts" during the recent US meetings between Secretary Shultz and Shevardnadze, perhaps reflecting strained relations with his new boss. [redacted]

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Despite indications that their political futures are uncertain, both Korniyenko and Aleksandrov are slated to accompany Gorbachev to Geneva. Their inclusion on the official team suggests that Gorbachev is in no rush to remove them or at least that he deems it inadvisable to do so prior to his meeting with President Reagan.

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The Party Apparatus

While rumors abound of Gorbachev's designs on senior foreign policy officials in the party apparatus, major changes have yet to be announced. The status of Leonid Zamyatin, current head of the International Information Department, appears uncertain. Although Zamyatin will go to Geneva with Gorbachev, rumors persist that he is in political trouble and that the IID will be disbanded. IID will be folded into Yakovlev's Propaganda Department.

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Boris Ponomarev, the veteran head of the International Department and a key party actor in framing policy towards the West, but his age alone (80) makes his departure imminent. Gorbachev's choice of a new head of the Department, (a post most likely to also include membership on the Secretariat) will be an important indicator of the direction Soviet policy will take under his leadership.

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Vadim Zagladin, currently the department's first deputy chief.

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Zagladin has been a central figure in elaborating Soviet policy on such issues as East-West relations and arms control. In his writings and public remarks Zagladin appears to hold a more optimistic view concerning the long-term prospects for US-Soviet relations than some Soviet officials

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